

REVIEW ESSAY

Reinhold Reith

THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF CRAFT IN GERMANY A NEW EDITION OF THE WORK OF RUDOLF WISELL

WISSELL, RUDOLF. *Des alten Handwerks Recht und Gewohnheit*. 2., erw. und bearb. Ausgabe hrsg. von Ernst Schraepler. I. II. III. Colloquium Verlag, Berlin 1971; 1974; 1981. xii, 527 pp.; x, 592 pp.; x, 476 pp. III. DM 68.00; 88.00; 138.00.

— *Des alten Handwerks Recht und Gewohnheit*. 2., erw. und bearb. Ausgabe hrsg. von Ernst Schraepler, bearb. von Harald Reissig. IV. V. VI. Colloquium Verlag, Berlin 1985; 1986; 1988. xviii, 484 pp.; xi, 509 pp.; viii, 520 pp. III. DM 138.00; 158.00; 188.00.

In recent years, the “old craft” has received an increasing amount of attention in social history research. Although craft was rarely a topic of scientific study as late as the 1960s, a period still influenced by the social climate of Germany’s *Wirtschaftswunder*, work on it began to command more attention within the framework of social history in the 1970s and 1980s following Wilhelm Abel’s outline for “new directions in the economic study of crafts” in 1970.¹ In contrast to the earlier history of guilds, which was often preoccupied with matters concerning rules and regulations, new issues and methods – influenced by the expansion of social and economic history since the 1960s – have become typical of the history of craft.² A particularly impelling force has been centered in the “Göttingen School” of historical research of craft.³ Numerous conferences and publications on this

¹ Wilhelm Abel (ed.), *Handwerksgeschichte in neuer Sicht* (Göttingen, 1970; 2nd ed. 1978).

² See Karl Heinrich Kaufhold, “Handwerksgeschichtliche Forschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland”, in Ulrich Engelhardt (ed.), *Handwerker in der Industrialisierung. Lage, Kultur und Politik vom späten 18. bis ins frühe 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 20–33.

³ See Abel, *Handwerksgeschichte*; Karl Heinrich Kaufhold, *Das Handwerk der Stadt Hildesheim im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1980; 1st ed. 1968). Important works by Fischer on the social and economic history of handicrafts date back even to the 1950s and 1960s: See Wolfram Fischer, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung* (Göttingen, 1972).

topic highlight this interest.⁴ Studies on protoindustrialization, for example, have emphasized the extent of non-urban industrial production and have directed attention to rural industry that produced for interregional and international markets. Thus on the one hand, a reevaluation of the urban–rural division of labor has been undertaken, while on the other, the question concerning the structure and dynamics of urban crafts – especially the export trade – has been reasked. The analysis of artisan labor processes links aspects of economic, social and technical history within the scope of a “labor culture”,⁵ and in light of current problems, historical issues of an ecological-technical nature (environmental pollution, industrial hygiene and pathology, etc.) have been also taken up.

Family history research has significantly stimulated the analysis of social forms in the crafts: The socialization of the “petty bourgeois”, the structural expansion of family craft businesses, and the impact of labor organization on family structures have been studied in this context.⁶ Methods of quantification have influenced this field of research just as have impulses from sociology. Looking beyond the family, each of the different social groups in the crafts have been more distinctly delineated: Current debate has initiated research on female labor and altered the picture of an “unhistorical period” in the gainful employment of women, although the early modern period still remains *terra incognita* and no study is available in the German-speaking community comparable to the instructive analysis of Lyon by Natalie Zemon Davis.⁷ Even more than the apprentices,⁸ to whom tradi-

⁴ See Jürgen Bergmann, *Das Berliner Handwerk in den Frühphasen der Industrialisierung* (Berlin, 1973); Rainer S. Elkar (ed.), *Deutsches Handwerk in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit. Sozialgeschichte – Volkskunde – Literaturgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1983); Geoffrey Crossick and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (eds), *Shopkeepers and master artisans in nineteenth-century Europe* (London and New York, 1984); Klaus Roth (ed.), *Handwerk in Mittel- und Südosteuropa. Mobilität, Vermittlung und Wandel im Handwerk des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1987); Friedrich Lenger, *Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Handwerker seit 1800* (Frankfurt/M., 1988), and Ulrich Wengenroth (ed.), *Prekäre Selbständigkeit. Zur Standortbestimmung von Handwerk, Hausindustrie und Kleingewerbe im Industrialisierungsprozeß* (Stuttgart, 1990).

⁵ Carlo Poni, “Maß gegen Maß. Wie der Seidenfaden lang und dünn wurde”, in R. Berdal et al. (eds), *Klassen und Kultur. Sozialanthropologische Perspektiven in der Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt/Main, 1982), pp. 21–53.

⁶ See e.g. Michael Mitterauer, “Zur familienbetrieblichen Struktur im zünftischen Handwerk”, in Michael Mitterauer, *Grundtypen alteuropäischer Sozialformen* (Stuttgart, 1979), pp. 98–122, and Joseph Ehmer, *Familienstruktur und Arbeitsorganisation im frühindustriellen Wien* (Munich, 1980).

⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis, “Women in the Crafts in Sixteenth-Century Lyon”. *Feminist Studies*, 8 (1982) 1, pp. 47–80.

⁸ Kurt Wesoly, *Lehrlinge und Handwerksgelesen am Mittelrhein. Ihre soziale Lage und ihre Organisation vom 14. bis ins 17. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/Main, 1985); Andreas Griebinger und Reinhold Reith, “Lehrlinge im deutschen Handwerk des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts. Arbeitsorganisation, Sozialbeziehungen und alltägliche Konflikte”, *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 13 (1986), pp. 149–199, and Reinhold Reith, “Zur

tional guild history attached little importance, journeymen have aroused the interest of research.⁹ Journeyman migration, or more specifically, their wandering activity has come to be known by now as a “hot topic”¹⁰ in which the issues involved in research on mobility, education, culture, urban and regional history overlap with those of social and economic history.¹¹ Studies on the formation of the working-class family or the proletarian community relations in the form of class building, tie into the social history of the settled and married journeymen.¹² The questions that these studies share are concerned with the continuities and discontinuities between artisan and worker mobility, as well as the artisan definition of their own political position.¹³ This also holds true for the study into the strike mobility of journeymen (“journeymen revolts”)¹⁴ which is currently connected with general strike and protest research.¹⁵

beruflichen Sozialisation im Handwerk vom 18. bis ins frühe 20. Jahrhundert”, *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 76 (1989), pp. 1–27.

⁹ Wilfried Reininghaus, *Die Entstehung der Gesellengilden im Spätmittelalter* (Wiesbaden, 1981); Knut Schulz, *Handwerksgesellen und Lohnarbeiter. Untersuchungen zur oberrheinischen und oberdeutschen Stadtgeschichte des 14. bis 17. Jahrhunderts* (Sigmaringen, 1985); Michael John Neufeld, “German Artisans and Political Repression: The Fall of the Journeymen’s Associations in Nuremberg”, *Journal of Social History*, 19 (1985–86), pp. 491–502; Reinhold Reith, *Arbeits- und Lebensweise im städtischen Handwerk. Zur Sozialgeschichte Augsburger Handwerksgelellten im 18. Jahrhundert (1700–1806)* (Göttingen, 1988), and Helmut Bräuer, *Gesellen im sächsischen Zunft Handwerk des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Weimar, 1989). On the interregional organization of craft, see Frank Göttmann, *Handwerk und Bündnispolitik. Die Handwerkerbünde am Mittelrhein vom 14. bis ins 17. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/Main, 1977).

¹⁰ Gerhard Jaritz and Albert Müller (eds), *Migration in der Feudalgesellschaft* (Frankfurt/Main and New York, 1988).

¹¹ Wilfried Reininghaus, “Die Migration der Handwerksgesellen in der Zeit der Entstehung ihrer Gilden”, *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 68 (1981), pp. 1–21. Knut Schulz, “Die Handwerksgesellen”, in P. Moraw (ed.), *Unterwegssein im Spätmittelalter* (Berlin, 1985), pp. 71–92; Rainer S. Elkar, “Schola migrationis. Überlegungen und Thesen zur neuzeitlichen Geschichte der Gesellenwanderungen aus der Perspektive quantitativer Untersuchungen”, in Roth, *Handwerk in Mittel- und Südosteuropa*, pp. 87–108, and Helmut Bräuer, *Gesellenmigration in der Zeit der industriellen Revolution* (Karl-Marx-Stadt, 1982).

¹² Hartmut Zwahr, *Zur Konstituierung des Proletariats als Klasse. Strukturuntersuchungen über das Leipziger Proletariat während der industriellen Revolution* (Berlin, 1978); Wolfgang Renzsch, *Handwerker und Lohnarbeiter in der frühen Industrialisierung* (Göttingen, 1980); Jürgen Kocka, *Lohnarbeit und Klassenbildung. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland 1800–1875* (Berlin and Bonn, 1983), and Friedrich Lenger, *Zwischen Kleinbürgertum und Proletariat. Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der Düsseldorfer Handwerker* (Göttingen, 1986).

¹³ Jürgen Bergmann, *Wirtschaftskrise und Revolution. Handwerker und Arbeiter 1848/49* (Stuttgart, 1986), and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (ed.), *Die radikale Mitte. Lebensweise und Politik von Handwerkern und Kleinhändlern in Deutschland seit 1848* (Munich, 1985).

¹⁴ Klaus Schwarz, *Die Lage der Handwerksgesellen in Bremen während des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Bremen, 1975).

¹⁵ Andreas Griebinger, *Das symbolische Kapital der Ehre. Streikbewegungen und kol-*

Earlier research in the *Volkskunde* – known as *Bauernkunde* or peasantlore – scarcely examined urban craft. It limited itself for the most part to documenting the phenomena of rituals.¹⁶ Today, the central focus of *Volkskunde* research of craft lies in the field of a tangible culture.¹⁷ The “universality of the tangible” opens up perspectives for a broader definition of everyday culture in the sense of a “material culture” of craft (work, housing, meals, drink, clothing). A convergence and overlapping of more recent trends of anthropological and social history research becomes visible. The interest in the history of craft is revealed not the least by the republication of the work of Rudolf Wissell, which first appeared in two volumes in 1929 and can be considered as a standard work on craft history even today.¹⁸

Since Wissell’s study can only be understood in conjunction with his biography, it is necessary to first offer a short historical depiction of the man himself.¹⁹ Wissell was born in 1869 in Göttingen and joined the social democratic movement following his apprenticeship as a mechanical engineer. During his wandering (Hamburg, Kiel, Bremen, Essen) he was exposed to craft customs at the Trade Association of Locksmiths and Mechanical Engineers in Kiel, the old association of locksmith journeymen, at the time of the Anti-Socialist Law. A committed socialist, he joined the party already in 1888. Due to his journalistic talents, he soon became a correspondent for various social democratic magazines and was active in propagandizing for the party and union organization. Through his duties as labor secretary in Lübeck starting in 1901, he became familiar with the social-political tasks and problems of the working class. The labor secretariats were considered to be the “Supreme School of Social Politics”, and many union functionaries (including Friedrich Ebert starting in 1900 in Bremen, for example) gained important experience here. In 1905 Wissell

lektives Bewußtsein deutscher Handwerksgesellen im 18. Jahrhundert (Frankfurt/Main, Berlin and Vienna, 1981).

¹⁶ Max Matter, “Volkskunde des Handwerks als Sozialgeschichte des Handwerks? Versuch eines Überblicks über volkskundliche Handwerksforschung. Geschichte und neuere Forschungsergebnisse”, in Elkar, *Deutsches Handwerk in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, pp. 183–202.

¹⁷ The following conference publications offer an overview: Arnold Lühning and Uschi Stiehler (eds), *Handwerk und seine Darstellung im Museum* (Kieler Blätter zur Volkskunde 17), (Neumünster, 1985), and *Handwerk und Sachkultur im Spätmittelalter. Internationaler Kongreß Krems an der Donau 7. bis 10. Oktober 1986* (Vienna, 1988).

¹⁸ Rudolf Wissell, *Des alten Handwerks Recht und Gewohnheit*, 2 vols., ed. by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Deutsche Handwerkskultur through Dr. Konrad Hahm (Berlin, 1929). (The volumes of the first edition will be noted with Roman numbers throughout the text.)

¹⁹ Biographical references: Rudolf Wissell, *Aus meinen Lebensjahren*, with a documentation appendix edited by Ernst Schraepfer (Berlin, 1983), and David E. Barclay, *Rudolf Wissell als Sozialpolitiker 1890–1933* (Berlin, 1984).

accepted a mandate as a member of the Lübeck Diet and became politically active in parliament. In 1908 he entered the executive of the *Zentralarbeitssekretariat* (Central Labor Secretariat, founded in 1903 by the General Commission of Free Trade Unions) in Berlin and assumed the position of first secretary between the years 1910 and 1918. In the spring of 1918 he was elected to the *Reichstag* as a SPD candidate; in late 1919 he then entered the Council of the People's Representatives as head of economic policy before becoming the first *Reichsminister* for Economics of the Weimar Republic in February 1919. The only part of his program of *Gemeinwirtschaft* or social economy, which he had put together with his undersecretary Wichard von Moellendorff, that actually materialized was the Reich Economic Council. His concept of economic policy took on the contours of a planned economy that was criticized as being a permanent form of war economy; by June 1919 Wissell had resigned.

Afterwards, he dedicated himself to union work (in the executive committee of the ADGB) and was active as an arbitrator. In 1928 he again entered the government, this time as Labor Minister in the Great Coalition cabinet of Reich Chancellor Hermann Müller. He considered a primary task to be the protecting of the social policy achievements of the Weimar Republic. However, the unfavourable economic development and finally the Great Depression led to serious conflicts within the coalition (benefit reduction versus contribution increases), and in the end caused the break-up of the Great Coalition in March 1930. For a short time afterwards Wissell acted as an arbitrator for Berlin-Brandenburg, but was dismissed after Papen's coup in July 1932. Having been again elected to the *Reichstag* in 1933, he could no longer exercise his mandate following the National Socialist seizure of power. In the course of the assault against the unions, Wissell was arrested in the *Bundeshaus*, then placed under police surveillance. Later he also obviously kept in contact with the Leuschner Circle, as well as with Adolf Reichwein, who belonged to the Kreisau Circle and was executed in 1944.

After the war Wissell again became politically active, especially as a member of the social policy committee of the Social Democratic Party (SPD). As an opponent of the politics of Otto Grotewohl, he used his journalistic talents to strongly object to the unification of the KPD and the SPD. In the years following the war, he also wrote his memoirs. In 1949 he was designated as an honorary citizen of the city of Berlin, was awarded the Federal Service Cross in 1954 and died in Berlin in 1962. In the funeral oration, Willy Brandt called him the "personification of social conscience of the Weimar Republic".²⁰

²⁰ Barclay, *Rudolf Wissell als Sozialpolitiker*, p. 1.

Like numerous union leaders, Wissell himself came from the crafts, just as at first the social base of the labor movement was constituted rather by artisans with long established traditions, skilled workers having completed a craft apprenticeship, and occasionally even craft masters.²¹ As he stresses in the preface to the first edition, his interest in craft history was kindled by his encounter with the remnants of craft tradition during his journeyman travels. It was then that he joined the Trade Association of Locksmiths and Mechanical Engineers, which had developed out of the old journeymen association. "And I have never once quit being interested in this area of old folklore."²² His initial interest in customs soon led him to realize that it would not be possible to understand "traditional ways and customary practices" without analyzing the crafts as a comprehensive social entity. For Wissell, the study of the old crafts was in no way an eccentric hobby. Like Georg Schanz, Lujo Brentano and Bruno Schönlank and contrary to Eduard Bernstein, he emphasized both the forerunner function of the journeymen associations for the labor movement and the continuity between them. "This area only appears to lie remote from the activity of unions, social policy and politics. In the seventies, union agitation particularly in the construction industry was conducted many times through the numerous journeymen associations that still existed."²³ The journeyman's wandering, a characteristic feature of the social constitution of the crafts in Central Europe, not only caused an undeniable broadening of a journeyman's horizons (Wissell labeled it the "university of the crafts"), it was for him a basis of union agitation. "The weapons of the old journeymen associations, namely work stoppages and boycotts, continued to live on in memory, and the feeling of togetherness, the solidarity, grew out of an occupational affiliation that forged an ever stronger bond between those in the same line of work than the strictly local community could."²⁴

²¹ Klaus Tenfelde, "Die Geschichte der Arbeiter zwischen Strukturgeschichte und Alltagsgeschichte", in W. Schieder and V. Sellin (eds), *Sozialgeschichte in Deutschland. Entwicklungen und Perspektiven im internationalen Zusammenhang* (Göttingen, 1987), vol. 4, pp. 81–104, p. 93. For an international comparison: Friedrich Lenger, "Die handwerkliche Phase der Arbeiterbewegung in England, Frankreich, Deutschland und den USA – Plädoyer für einen Vergleich", *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 13 (1987), pp. 232–243.

²² Wissell, *Aus meinen Lebensjahren*, p. 229.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

²⁴ *Ibid.* The importance of wandering journeymen for the creation of the unions has just recently again become a topic of debate: Eisenberg argues that the guild traditions proved to have acted predominantly as retarding factors for union formation, and that the travels of the "educationally zealous, wandering German journeymen" were instead detrimental to the formation of unions. Boll, for example, argues the contrary, namely that several guild traditions (journeyman wandering, hostels, workbooks, viaticum) were indeed conducive to it. See Christiane Eisenberg, *Deutsche und englische Gewerkschaften. Entstehung und Entwicklung bis 1878 im Vergleich* (Göttingen, 1986), and

Although as a social politician he saw the basis of modern social policy as lying in the “old crafts”, all forms of social romanticism were alien to him. In his view, the expansion and rationalization of industrial production were the prerequisites for change in capitalism.²⁵ Still, he assumed that modern social policy was based on the old rights of artisans.²⁶ In his dissertation address, “The social concept in old craft”, he outlined his thesis that the old artisan rights contained the basis concepts of collective labor law (the right and prerogative to wage demands, arbitration, provision for sickness, accident and work disability).²⁷ On the basis of his work *Des alten Handwerks Recht und Gewohnheit* (The rights and habits of old craft), Wissell was awarded an honorary doctorate for political economy from the faculty for law and governmental science of the University of Kiel (and not from the philosophy faculty; vol. 1, p. vi) in 1929. For three and a half decades Wissell had collected material on the history of the old craft and finally published it in a two-volume edition that soon went out of print. Even though the work found recognition from the academic community, Wissell himself – as an autodidact – had not intended to produce a scientific study. He wanted a greater public, namely the artisan and working classes “whose occupational associations in some cases were the direct decedents of the old guilds and journeymen brotherhoods” (vol. I, p. ix), to understand his work. In addition, he was aware that his work came much closer to resembling a collection of material than a historical analysis. The first volume was thus a historical outline of the history of “old craft”; chronologically he covered the period from the fourteenth to the eighteenth or early nineteenth century. His subject matter covered all German-speaking regions and included the emergence of craft and the guilds, the period of the guild disputes, craft initiation, and craft honor and dishonesty. He presented the biographic cycle, always chronologically structured and documented by many sources, with its apprenticeship, wandering (mandatory wandering, hostels, support, the extent and distance of the wandering) *Mutzeit* (waiting period prior to master title), the masterpiece and masterfeast, as well as initiation into the guild. In addition to the development of the guild on the local level, the national and regional guilds (especially the so-called Keßler circles) are also covered. In addressing the topic of guild jurisdiction, that is their jurisdictional function, their economic function (occupational-, mar-

Friedhelm Boll, “Gesellenwandern und verspätete Gewerkschaftsentwicklung”, *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, IWK 25 (1989), 1, pp. 83–87.

²⁵ Barclay, *Rudolf Wissell als Sozialpolitiker*, p. 9.

²⁶ Walther G. Oschilewski, “Rudolf Wissell und der soziale Geist des alten Handwerks”, in Otto Bach (ed.), *Rudolf Wissell. Ein Leben für soziale Gerechtigkeit* (Berlin–Grunewald, 1959), pp. 81–104.

²⁷ Rudolf Wissell, *Der soziale Gedanke im alten Handwerk* (Berlin, 1931).

ket-, and price-ordering aspects), and finally their social function, Wissell then implicitly explains that which he defines as “old craft”, the advancement of associative elements. Especially in the chapter on “*Das soziale Gebiet der Zünfte*” (The social sphere of guilds), he addresses topics that are very *en vogue* today in the social and economic history of craft, topics such as labor referrals, notice, wages, work hours, blue Mondays, widows’ rights, women in craft, the married journeyman, and the provision for sick craft members. This also holds true for the chapter on “*Gesellenkämpfe*” (journeymen disputes). Even Georg Schanz and Bruno Schönlink had raised the topics of the creation of an independent journeyman movement and the relationship between masters and journeymen. Schanz in particular advocated the idea that as early as the fourteenth or fifteenth century “two social estates” with diverging interests had come into existence in craft, and thus the journeyman associations (like the trade unions later) “appeared to be a reaction to the ruthless exploitation of outside labor”.²⁸ From the “wage dispute of the wool weaver journeymen of Constance in 1385” to the “Berlin taylor strike of 1801”, Wissell documented numerous journeymen unrests, revolts, or strikes,²⁹ as well as the earlier Reich decrees and regulations leveled against the guilds. He dedicated an entire chapter to the “walkout of the Augsburg shoe labourers” of 1726 on the basis of the wealth of files still existing, especially since this strike was the occasion that finally provoked the Reich to issue the 1731 decree against improper practices in craft. The wording of the Reich decree is reprinted and supplemented by the commentary on the “execution of the Reich decree” that supplies insight into the policy of the Reich and the individual states. The Reich decree was not very effective, contrary to later ordinances and measures from the end of the eighteenth century leveled against the right of association to the 1845 measures on the right to form coalitions; these are covered in the last chapter of the first volume. With regards to the creation of a legally guaranteed right to form coalitions, which was for him the prerequisite for the introduction of collective agreements, he also stressed the “productivity of rights” to be found in the old artisan coalitions: “The

²⁸ Georg Schanz, *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Gesellenverbände* (Leipzig, 1877), p. 141f. In his study on Saxon journeymen, Bräuer pointed out that this process of differentiation (or the approach to wage labor) experienced “no steady continuation by the decline of the early capitalistic boom between the late sixteenth century and the Thirty Years War and, in this regard, no uninterrupted transition from craft journeymen to early and preliminary forms of the proletariat”. Bräuer, *Gesellen im sächsischen Zunft-handwerk*, p. 107.

²⁹ On the usage of the term *strike* in reference to the actions of craft journeymen: Andreas Griebinger, “Handwerkerstreiks in Deutschland während des 18. Jahrhunderts. Begriff, Organisationsformen, Ursachenkonstellationen”, in Engelhardt, *Handwerker in der Industrialisierung*, pp. 407–434.

social concept cannot be administrated solely by the state, it also requires self-administration by autonomous social groups.”³⁰

The second volume, organized according to occupations, included the documentation on journeymen tradition. In the preface, “*Allgemeines*” (General Aspects) Wissell advocates documenting everyday life: “Often a piece of cultural history is embodied in it which is of incomparable value in understanding an earlier way of living, thinking and feeling” (vol. II, p. 1). Initial steps towards a documentation of craft tradition could be found especially in the work of Friedrich Frisius, whose ethnographical perspective Wissell shared.³¹ In the summary (vol. II, p. 577), Wissell calls the depiction of craft customs a “tiring journey”. It is influenced above all by the uniformity of customs in the course of interregional expansion caused by journeyman migration.

With regards to “customs and rituals”, Wissell also emphasizes the link to the labor movement: “The threads and relations between the old journeymen organizations and those of the modern labor movement are much stronger and multivarious than many suppose. In many instances the link has remained unbroken. [. . .] I am familiar with an entire group of local administrative offices of quite different types of associations that are in possession of the old chests, drinking vessels, and numerous documents. They originate from one of the old journeymen organizations; these were their seedbeds” (vol. II, p. 6). Wissell explained the scant attention paid to the “roots” (and criticized Eduard Bernstein’s dismissal of such attention as empty phrases) as resulting from a lack of knowledge on the meaning of customs, which were many times condemned as “absurdities” and “irrational habits” under the verdict of “craft mispractices” even in the eighteenth century. In more recent research, the question of continuity between craft, or better, journeymen culture and working-class culture has indeed been a greatly debated controversy. For example, Kocka assumes that working-class culture “developed often through a strict demarcation from older craft, job-specific, and general elements of popular culture”.³²

After the documentation on “customs” follow yet another two chapters on “artisan celebrations and games” and “artisan poetry”. Lastly, numerous ordinances have been included in the appendix.

Up until 1945, Wissell worked on a revised edition as well as on a third volume (songs and sayings, emblems) that was also to have contained a criticism of national socialist writing on craft. One copy of the revised

³⁰ On the right to form coalitions, see the extensive and comparative work of Rudolf Wissell, “Koalitionen und Koalitionsverbote”, in L. Elster and A. Weber (eds), *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften* (Jena, 1923), 4th ed., vol. 5, pp. 734–756.

³¹ Andreas Griebinger, *Das symbolische Kapital der Ehre*, p. 11.

³² See Jürgen Kocka, “Arbeiterkultur als Forschungsthema”, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 5 (1979) 1, pp. 5–11, p. 10.

version burned during the war at the publishing house in Bremen, another in Berlin. After the war, Wissell once again dedicated himself to completing a revision, one that finally did serve as the basis for the second, expanded edition.³³

The new edition: The two-volume original edition has now been divided into six subvolumes, and the organization has been kept essentially the same. The preface of the new edition presents a short biographical sketch and explains Wissell's original intentions. Regrettably, the preface written by Wissell himself has not been included. However, his style and manner of expression has been retained in the new edition with only a few minor changes. The source citations have been collated since Wissell often modernized them. Source citations are now footnoted; having footnotes at the bottom of the page facilitates the reading of the volumes considerably. In the first edition, an original source could only be elicited through a cumbersome source number. The bibliography has been revised and the registers have been redone. Additional source material has been incorporated into the revised edition, recent literature from as late as the 1950s has been included. Wissell also discussed national socialist literature on crafts, such as the work of Rudolf Siemsen on the *Germanengut im Zunftbrauch* (Germanic Heritage in Guild Tradition) (vol. 3, pp. 234–240).

Since Wissell primarily examined cultural phenomena, his work was most often associated with anthropology, although within the discipline itself the work was only recognized up to a point; the period was not a favorable one for the Wissellian opus. Georg Fischer, for example, did not once mention Wissell's work in his 1943 survey, which appeared again in 1962.³⁴

The issues raised and sources studied typifying Wissell's work were not of interest to German historiography in the Weimar period – and certainly not later on. Social history issues, as developed by the later historical school of political economy, the social sciences and cultural history, were no longer important in German historiography, or more specifically in the established discipline, following the turn of the century. In light of this conflict with political historiography (Lamprecht controversy), Gerhard Oestreich even spoke of the ostracism of social history research in Germany on the level of national history.³⁵

³³ David E. Barclay, "Die Bibliothek Rudolf Wissells in der Historischen Kommission zu Berlin", *IWK* 11 (1975), 4, pp. 496–498. The Wissell papers are located in the Federal Archives in Koblenz. See Monika Richarz, "Der Nachlaß Rudolf Wissell", *IWK* 2 (1966), 2, p. 17f.

³⁴ Georg Fischer, "Das handwerkliche Brauchtum und seine Bedeutung für Volkskunde und Sozialgeschichte", in Georg Fischer, *Die deutsche Handwerkerkunde* (Leipzig, 1943), vol. 2, pp. 3–106.

³⁵ Gerhard Oestreich, "Die Fachhistorie und die Anfänge der sozialgeschichtlichen

A German cultural history that was restricted to the history of erudition and ideas (culture is that which contrasts to the mundane) was inevitably unable to integrate “craft culture”. Considered by anthropology as “peasantlore”, craft was forced to remain a peripheral topic. And it is precisely this historiographic background which makes the significance of Wissell’s work stand out. Thus it needs to be emphasized once more that many of the questions and topics that shape the social history of craft today were already introduced by Wissell. The “Wissell” was therefore a milestone for social history, and his actuality is undisputed.